

The American
Student Series

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of Life in the
Ministry

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*John F. Gouache
No. 1*

SOME REWARDS OF LIFE IN THE MINISTRY.

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To the virile, mettlesome and high-spirited young manhood in our churches, schools and colleges no other calling holds out such allurements as the ministry; none other offers such uncommon opportunities for power, influence and high leadership, especially to the uncommon men, the superior men, the earnest, eager and forcible men.

Can a man call himself to the ministry? No! But some things every Christian young man can and ought to do. He can try to be not morally unfit for nor unworthy of the great calling. He can endeavor to maintain such a spiritual sensitiveness as will make it possible for him to hear a divine call; he can cultivate such nobility of soul and such reverence for Duty as not to be incapable of being bowed by the majesty and fired by the fascination of the supreme vocation; he can keep mind and heart open to appeal by freeing himself from such prejudices against the work of the ministry as might cause him to resist or ignore a divine call; he can give fair consideration to the advantages and attractions of that work.

To suggest some of the satisfactions and rewards of the minister's life is the simple aim of this brief monograph:

1. If a young man cares to live on high levels, the ministerial calling, more than any other, provides and guarantees that his life shall be elevated,—noble, only noble, and that continually.

2. If he desires to be on the best of terms with his fellow men this sacred calling puts him from the first into the finest, sweetest and most honorable relations with mankind, making his feelings friendly, his motives pure, his intentions beneficent, his interest in men not predatory nor selfish but sincerely high-minded and altruistic, and all his intercourse and transactions worthy, commendable, and elevated.

3. If he desires to live in contact with the nobler side of human nature and see its higher manifestations the ministerial life offers him this privilege. In this it has the advantage over other professions and occupations. The profession of medicine deals with man's body; not with the real manhood, but with the low, narrow, fleshly tenement—what Shakspeare calls “this muddy vesture of decay.” The physician lives on the sickly, physical side of things and is in danger of depressing views and materialistic tendencies. The legal profession keeps its practitioner in contact with the seamy side of human nature. The son of a successful lawyer abandoned the practice of law soon after beginning it, saying, “I do not want to spend my days settling the contentions and quarrels of people and living in the atmosphere of strife, antagonism and militant selfishness.” Commercial life pits a man

against his fellows in grim and selfish competition and, in existing conditions, involves dangers of much that is sordid, questionable and morally compromising. The prevailing customs and the rules of its game ignore the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount.

4. If one wishes the most complete self-development, the ministerial life beyond any other earthly sphere will permit the all-round development of his nature and the free expansion of his powers, and will foster his utmost possible growth in greatness and in goodness. No other climate can so surely bloom manhood into this consummate flower; no other air has so much oxygen for the incandescence of human faculties to the highest brilliancy, intensity and radiancy. The idealization which glorifies life is nowhere else so practicable as in the ministerial sphere.

(a) If one desires the largest possible range and expansion for the mind, the minister's work will put him in a limitless intellectual world. One young man experimented with so many successive occupations that he was fast acquiring an unmerited reputation for instability. He was so constituted as to lose interest in any vocation as soon as he mentally surveyed its extent and comprehended it. It then became mere repetition and routine. After years of this dissatisfied experimenting he heard the voice of the Infinite calling him to preach the everlasting Gospel, and then he entered upon inexhaustible realms and reaches of intellectual life, upon a sphere with room and verge enough for the keenest exploring eagerness and utmost excellence of his powers. After forty years his insatiable brain is still ranging and reveling in enlarging regions with endless vistas opening

ever on before. No earthly subject or fact is irrelevant or excluded, for all realities are more or less related to his work; and beyond the realm of things temporal, as Dr. George A. Gordon truly says, the "preacher is a dweller on the shores of the eternal deep; its tides ebb and flow under his vision; its murmur and thunder are the minor and major of an anthem to which he is always an eager listener."

(b) If one desires for himself the development of the finest graces of moral character, no other sphere equals the minister's. The whole pressure of his work pushes him up to high ethical levels; conditions conspire to make him a good man; by all his interests, temporal and eternal, he is bribed and bound to goodness. His own sense of duty, the expectations of his fellow men, the responsibility of his divine calling, the horror and disgrace of being less than good in such a place as his, the sanctity of the trust committed to him—all combine to brace him, nerve him and keep him upright, steadfast and pure. As the surgeon is necessitated by the requirements of his work to be the cleanest man in town physically, so the minister is, by the necessity of the case, obligated and in a certain sense guaranteed to be the cleanest man in town morally. Also, his calling shelters him from many moral exposures and perils; and white angels come to live with him to tend his growth in goodness, to prevent the warping of his nature to mean and vulgar ends, and to water the roots of all his virtues.

5. In the ministry there is also abundant place for the heroic and chivalric instincts of a sturdy manhood, for the virile play of the valiant will, the rugged courage, the resolute

fortitude, the grit and bravery of a militant life. Milton described man as the being "for contemplation and for valor formed." Nowhere more than in the sacred calling is there room and play for both contemplation and courage. "Christian knighthood," says Dr. Lyman, "is valor without vengeance." The Christian minister is a knight who fights on moral battlefields, making war against the Prince of Darkness and the black angels. Conquering the kingdom for the King of kings, he may in any place be as truly a soldier and a hero as was Garibaldi when he led the thousand to Marsala and gave a kingdom to his king. In fine, for the raising of all the factors of manhood, intellectual, spiritual, and heroic, to their highest power, no occupation or sphere can surpass that of the ministry.

6. The minister's aim and work are favorable to the production of eminent examples of pure and noble living. "The simple life," with its inherent refinement, dignity, and grace—for which there is now in many circles a new propaganda—finds finest illustration in the parsonages of the land, and "the strenuous life," with all its zest and glowing exhilaration, has conspicuous and daily illustration in the ardent, enthusiastic activities of hosts of ministers. For high living, in the true sense, a parsonage is a better place to be born in or to live in than a palace; and it is a proven fact that parsonages furnish more men and women for the higher places of useful and honorable life than any other class of homes. By his shining example of blameless, manly, admirable living, the Christian minister "allures to brighter worlds and leads the way." He gives men their best conceptions of the

meaning and use of life, and in his measure shows them how to live; his life becomes a far-seen landmark and a lofty light.

7. The approval of heaven on the sanity and rightness of his mode of life is seen in the fulfillment to him, more than to other men, of the divine promise: "With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." He is privileged and assisted not only to live better, but to live longer than others. The life insurance companies will insure him for a lower annual premium because his profession increases the expectation of longevity for him. The minister's insurance policy, issued at a reduced rate, is God's certificate of approval upon his way of life as being conformed to the divine laws of nature and to the habits of the normal, ideal man.

8. The ministry gives a man the finest opportunity to be recognized as the model gentleman of the community, known to be such, not by the token of soft hands, dainty tastes, self-indulgent spirit or superior airs, but by unfailing good behavior, by the proof of gentle manners, kindly words and considerate ways; by always manifesting concern for the comfort and claims of others rather than for his own; by sympathetic attention and tender ministry to the woes and wants and wishes of the needy and afflicted; and by superior self-control and composure in the presence of provocation. His very position and character will move men, women and children to show him their best side and their best manners, making their behavior toward him gentle, honorable and gracious; and this makes true gentlemanliness easy and almost inevitable in him. The unfailing and impartial courtesy of

God's ministers is proverbial in every Christian community. No other class of men can show a larger proportion of true, gentle, chivalrous gentlemen, without fear and without reproach. The easy peers of Sir Philip Sidney, scarce on fierce battlefields, are numerous among the ministers of Christ.

9. The Christian minister ranks high among real patriots. He is a planter and a strengthener of those moralities which alone preserve the state and make nations great. No man on the Mayflower was of more conspicuous value to the Pilgrims of Plymouth and the free empire they were founding than Pastor Robinson, and even a casual reading of the history of our Republic will show that the debt of the American nation to its clergy from the beginning until now is indisputable and immeasurable. The book which calls them "Nation-builders" does not err therein. The nation owes more to them than to its armies. But for the work of the clergy the soldiers on the battlefields would have had no country worth fighting for. No senator of the United States did more for the preservation of the Union than did that splendid patriot, Bishop Matthew Simpson. As a class, the clergy are the purest of patriots—seeking no office, but promoting their country's welfare by fighting the sins which are a disgrace to any people and inculcating the righteousness which exalteth a nation. The minister's love of country is intelligent, disinterested; and, in patriotic service, not the President in the White House can make a contribution surpassing his in saving quality and perpetual potency.

10. The minister holds the proud position of universal benefactor. He lives among his

fellows not as a suppliant for favors, but as a bestower of benefits; not as a beggar, but as a prince. If he receives from men temporal things, he ministers to them infinitely greater spiritual things. His life is one long largess to the weal and the wealth of the world. In numerous large particulars, and in life's grand totals, he makes many rich. There is no interest of human existence—intellectual, moral or physical—which he does not greatly serve. Nothing human is alien or inaccessible to him; the range of his services does not stop short of universal bounds. He purifies the air which all men breathe. The pulpit is built on the ridge-crest of the world and the vitalizing streams of its beneficent influence flow down all the slopes of life. The Christian minister stands without pride or self-consciousness in the superb attitude of benefactor to all mankind. His life and work are a clean asset on the balance sheet of the world, and in this he finds as much joy as the world finds profit. The new teaching in all our universities is that selfishness is a colossal blunder. The philosophy of today coincides with that of Christ, "He that will save his life shall lose it." Browning sings exultingly the splendid magnanimity of the hero who holds his life out on his hand for all the world to take. That is Christlike.

11. If faithful, the minister will dwell in honor all his days. Wherever he lives and works he will be accorded a clear title to esteem and reverence. In every community the true ambassador of Jesus Christ is clothed upon with public respect as with a robe of honor.* He is looked up to as a teacher, exemplar and leader. His advice is sought and

his words listened to. Men confide to him their most sacred affairs; they seek him as a wise, safe counsellor. In crises and exigencies they send for him and lay their hearts in his hand. When he walks the streets, men lay down their respect and confidence before him like a carpet for his feet.

12. The deep and lasting gratitude of many human hearts is also part of his reward. Men and women whom his ministry has blessed will gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness to him. Now and then someone will say to him: "You saved me in my time of perplexity and peril and despair; at the parting of the ways you showed me the path of life. You pointed me to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. I owe everything to you." Multitudes to whom he has ministered, during their lifetime and especially in their sickness and their dying, will go into eternity with a great love for him, and will wait to welcome him in heaven as their friend and guide and comforter.

13. The Christian minister has cosmic alliances. He coöperates with the stars in their courses to help the coming of a kingdom which shall have no end. His work makes him a close co-worker with God and brings him into intimate partnership with the Saviour of the world, the Lord of Life. Putting his hand under the burden which crushes humanity into the dust, to lift the load and let humanity up, he touches a Hand with nail-prints in it which was there before his was, and he feels the thrill of knowing himself to be in partnership with Christ and a fellow helper of those for whom the King of Glory died. And to hear the Master saying, "Lo, I am with you," is

no sweeter than to hear him say, “You are with me in my most glorious plans and mightiest work.” On earth there is no privilege comparable to that; honorable and lofty business it is, indeed!

These are a few of the rewards of life in the ministry. Virtually, all men, in proportion to their intelligence and moral sense, concede the ministerial calling to be the highest of all vocations. Why should not Christian young men pray that God may count them worthy to be called to this great work? Bunsen said Gladstone had heard higher tones than any other public man in England. For a young man to listen for the voice of the highest, to acquiesce in its call, to train his complex manhood up to fittest condition and to receive the spiritual empowering which is promised to go with his commission; and then, when good and ready, to fling all his faculty and force to the front of the fray, where God and his armies are setting themselves against Satan and his black legions—there can be nothing better, nobler or more rewarding for a man to do with his life than that. In time and in eternity it returns priceless profits, limitless emoluments.

Prosperous years are now planting our whole country, in cities, towns and villages, with noble edifices for Christian work. America is full of great churches, inviting young men to pulpits of commanding influence—pulpits which are offered as thrones of power to men who are capable of realizing the higher values of life; who are too manly to be ruled and ridden by mere things, and too noble for sordid aims:—thrones of power worthy of the splendid abilities of men like Beecher, and Phillips Brooks, and Maltbie Babcock, not to mention a

host of living ministers equally sturdy and true, tender and brave: while beyond our national borders, in other lands, wide open mission fields invite the stalwart sons of God to come and conquer the whole world for Christ.

Today God is choosing and calling the young men who are to be the world's great spiritual leaders up the morning slope of this wonderful twentieth century to its glorious high noon. We repeat the sentence we began with: To the virile, mettlesome, high-spirited young manhood in our churches, schools, and colleges, no other calling holds out such allurements as the ministry, none other offers such uncommon opportunities for power, influence, real honor, and high leadership, especially to the uncommon men, the superior men, the earnest, eager and forcible men.

There was nothing untrue or irreverent in that saying of the old Puritan: "God had only one son, and He made Him a minister."

